

**NEW PROGRAM PROPOSAL:  
MASTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY**

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**ACTION  
Agenda Item D-5  
July 17, 2000**

**Recommendation:**

That the Master of Public Health degree program proposed by Eastern Kentucky University be approved and registered in CIP 51.2201 (Public Health, General).

**Rationale:**

- The proposed Master of Public Health program would provide training to professionals in environmental health science and community health education.
- The need for environmentalists and other community health professionals is documented in state and national plans. They include *The Environmental Health Specialist Credentialing Board Strategic Plan*; *The Strategic Plan of the Kentucky Department of Public Health*; *Healthy People 2000: National Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives*; and *Healthy Kentuckians 2000*.
- The program builds on an environmental health baccalaureate program that is one of only 24 such certified programs in the country, an undergraduate health education program that is approved by the Society of Public Health Educators and the American Association of Health Educators, and a post-baccalaureate curriculum that meets the requirements for state certification as a Chemical Abuse and Dependency Counselor.
- The program will be offered at times and places and in formats convenient to education and health professionals who are already in the workforce.
- To avoid unnecessary duplication, faculty and administrators from Eastern have discussed the proposed programs with representatives of Murray State University, the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, and Western Kentucky University. All have endorsed the ECU proposal.
- Eastern, Murray, UK, UofL, and Western have plans to share in the delivery of public health courses, including the use of distance learning technologies. They have drafted a "Proposal to Create a Statewide Distance Learning Public Health Consortium."

An executive summary submitted by Eastern Kentucky University is attached.

Staff Preparation by Larry Fowler

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY MASTERS IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) requests approval of Master in Public Health (MPH) degree to be jointly implemented by the Department of Health Promotion and Administration and the Department of Environmental Health Science, effective August 2000.

### **Program Description**

The proposed program is an interdisciplinary graduate program with options in Community Health and Environmental Health primarily designed for professionals in Eastern Kentucky University's service area. The proposed MPH is designed to fulfill the needs of health education and environmental health science professionals-individuals who assess the individual and collective needs of the community, collect, analyze, and interpret data, identify needs, set priorities, and develop, implement, and evaluate programs and services designed to improve the quality of life. Health education professionals are community outreach educators, family resource center directors, social workers, health care providers, therapists, substance abuse counselors, health care administrators, and other health professionals. These professions reflect both the magnitude and multi-disciplinary nature of health education and illustrates the need for a graduate degree program that is designed to provide a common background of knowledge and skills necessary to coordinate development and implementation of effective health programs, preventive approaches and service delivery.

In addition, the option in Environmental Health Science is a graduate program primarily tailored to meet the needs of professional holding supervisory or leadership roles in their profession. The program is designed to meet the needs of working professionals that cannot afford to leave their current position to attend school during the week. The classes will be offered on Saturdays and possibly Sundays along with several distance learning options.

The proposed Master of Public Health consists of a minimum of 36 to 42 graduate hours. A minimum of 50% of graduate hours must be at the 800 level. In the core requirements, program candidates have optional courses in health education and environmental health, which provides for flexibility in scheduling and use of existing University facilities and faculty. The core requirements, which the program candidates must take, consists of 18 credit hours in health education and environmental health courses, each option requires a minimum of 12 credit hours concentrating in one of the two options. In addition, each option requires six hours of research/thesis.

Students who have completed undergraduate degrees in environmental health or community health at any of the universities in the Commonwealth of Kentucky or other states can be admitted to the program provided they meet the graduate school requirements of EKU. Students may transfer credits for courses taken at another institution. Courses requested to be transferred will be reviewed by the Departmental graduate committee for approval following University guidelines for graduate credit transfer. Letters of support have been received from the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, Western Kentucky University, and Murray State University and are included in the application.

The proposed program is consistent with the mission of EKU and supports Kentucky's public health initiative. The MPH degree program will seek full accreditation from the National Environmental Health Science and Protection Accreditation Council (NEHSPA), Association for Advancement of Health Education and National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (AAHE-NCATE), Society of Public Health Educators (AHE-SOPHE), and the Council for Education and Public Health (CEPH). Preliminary contact with each of these accrediting bodies assures us that the proposed MPH degree program will meet the accrediting requirements.

### **Statement of Need and Demand for Program**

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is currently in a public health crisis with extensive problems in the environmental health areas of water and waste management and has the highest cancer and coronary vascular disease rates in the country. These issues can only be resolved by the production of skilled and highly educated public health professionals. The infrastructure of public health is complex and requires extensive collaborative action between the various universities with existing BS degrees and appropriate professional faculty in the state. In addition to state programs other non-governmental agencies will provide a continuous supply of students, as well as employment opportunities for students.

The program at EKU would also serve as a feeder program to the Dr. PH at the University of Kentucky and the Ph.D program at the University of Louisville. Interested graduates of the Eastern Kentucky University program will be encouraged to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Kentucky or University of Louisville.

Justification for the Master of Public Health degree is based on the need as documented in the following plans and assessments prepared by the State of Kentucky:

- ® *The Environmental Health Specialist Credentialing Board Strategic Plan;*
- ® *The Strategic Plan of the Kentucky Department of Public Health;*
- ® *Healthy People 2000: National Promotion and Disease Prevention Objectives;*
- ® *Healthy Kentuckians 2000.*

### **Employment Opportunities for Program Graduates**

The proposed Master of Public Health (MPH) program is designed to prepare students primarily for the local and state market, but has implications for regional and national markets as well.

The primary job market for graduates of the Environmental Health option will be local and state health departments, state and federal agencies and industry. There are more than 25,000 new environmental health openings each year (Federal Bureau of Health Manpower) of which the majority are and will be occupied by graduates without a degree in the areas related to the environmental health degree programs.

The general employment prospects the proposed Community Health option at the local level are impressive. The number of county and regional health departments eligible to receive funding for the development and implementation of health promotion and disease prevention programs potentially creates an open forum for employment opportunities. Additionally, KRS 309.804 (effective through January 24, 2005) mandates that educational preparation and certification of alcohol and drug counselors include the attainment of a master's degree in addictions or a related field. Thus, 152 employment opportunities are available through the local health departments and a minimum of 2800 positions exists at the state level. The Department of Justice, which has an employee base of 800, the Division of Family Service, which has an employee base of approximately 2000, fall under the jurisdiction of the aforementioned statute. Also, health agencies such as; the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, Planned Parenthood, Youth Services and Senior Citizens Centers offer employment opportunities to graduates with the proposed degree.

### **Implementation of Distance Learning**

As with many graduate degree programs, it is anticipated that more than 50% of the MPH graduate candidates will pursue their graduate education on a part-time basis, primarily due to employment obligations, family responsibilities, and fiscal constraints. Cooperatively, the two Departments have developed a cost effective program with flexible scheduling (including week-end classes) to accommodate a wide variety of prospective students. EKU's main campus and extended campus sites and

the week-end courses makes it possible for students from all regions of Kentucky and beyond to take courses with relative ease. Currently, distance learning programs such as the Kentucky Tele-Linking network (KTLN), web-based and correspondence courses are being offered in both departments and will be expanded to further meet the needs of prospective graduate students.

### **Resources**

Present facilities at the main campus of Eastern Kentucky University are adequate for the implementation of the proposed MPH degree program. Current facilities include; computer and multi-media laboratories, and classrooms in the Begley, Dizney, and Rowlett Buildings. Also, the ECU library houses a computer lab available to students on a 24 hour a day basis.

The ECU library currently subscribes to over 250 journals relating to Environmental and Community Health and over 11,000 print items related to areas of health.

Current faculty in the Department of Health Promotion and Administration and Environmental Health Science will implement the proposed MPH degree program, supplemented by other Departments within the College of Health Sciences. Two additional faculty will be requested by the Departments of Health Promotion and Administration and Environmental Health Science. These positions will be added through reallocation of existing resources.